

The complaint

Mr S and Miss S complain about how NATIONAL WESTMINSTER BANK PUBLIC LIMITED COMPANY valued their property. They said NatWest didn't support them in their appeals, and wouldn't seek an alternative valuation for them.

What happened

Whilst this complaint is brought by both Mr S and Miss S, as the mortgage is in both their names, our dealings have been with Miss S. So I'll mainly refer to her in this decision.

Miss S sought a valuation of the property she and Mr S have mortgaged with NatWest, to support a remortgage. She was very unhappy with how NatWest managed that valuation.

Miss S said they had no choice in the survey firm engaged. Miss S thought the resulting valuation was much too low, and she didn't think NatWest had supported her, as its customer, in dealing with the valuation firm.

Miss S said the valuer wouldn't deal with her directly, because NatWest was its customer. She said NatWest did pass her queries on to the valuer, about a comparable property and about home improvements that had been carried out on the property. But Miss S said this additional information was ignored by the valuer. And when the valuer repeatedly dismissed her additional information, NatWest just said there was nothing it could do.

Because NatWest didn't support her, Miss S said she felt unable to effectively challenge the valuation she got. And NatWest refused to obtain a second opinion, or to consider any other valuation she provided.

Miss S said she also experienced significant delays, inconsistent advice, and service failures throughout the complaint process. She said NatWest failed to properly log her complaint when it was first raised, and she was advised by NatWest to take her complaint to the valuer's professional body, although that was not an appropriate route for redress.

Miss S said NatWest had offered only £100 in compensation, which was not proportionate to the time, stress, and impact involved.

NatWest accepted that it could have provided better service to Miss S. It was sorry it hadn't actioned her complaint properly when she first asked it to. NatWest said the complaint had been logged for her, but it hadn't been passed on to the right team, and it apologised for this. It also felt she'd been given conflicting information at times, and the timescales it had given for parts of her complaint were wrong. NatWest paid Miss S £100 to say sorry for that.

But NatWest said that as a lender, it doesn't have technical expertise in property values, or knowledge of the local area. It is reliant on the expert opinion of a suitably qualified professional valuer. It had shared all of Miss S's challenges with the valuer, but the valuer wasn't prepared to amend the initial valuation figure. And NatWest said it wouldn't shop around with various surveyors for the highest figure.

Our investigator didn't think this complaint should be upheld. She said the valuation NatWest carried out was for lending purposes, so the outcome isn't always in line with estate agent valuations. NatWest had instructed someone with the appropriate professional qualifications, and it was entitled to rely on the professional opinion it got.

Our investigator said when Miss S appealed, NatWest referred the information she provided to the valuer, but they said the valuation remained unchanged. NatWest isn't supposed to reconsider the valuation of the property itself, because the bank doesn't have the relevant expertise to do that. And it's not obliged to seek a second opinion.

Our investigator did think NatWest could have provided better service here. She noted that it had offered £100 compensation to acknowledge and apologise for this. Our investigator said that was in line with what she would have asked NatWest to pay. She wouldn't ask NatWest to pay more, because she felt the majority of the upset in this case came from the valuation not being changed and other options not being available. And those weren't points on which she thought this complaint should be upheld.

Miss S disagreed. She didn't think we'd given enough weight to her complaint not being correctly logged when it was made, NatWest just accepting whatever its valuer said, and being left with no meaningful route to redress. She said both the valuer's professional body and NatWest had confirmed there was no further redress. She still felt the valuation had been inadequately and unprofessionally conducted. She said the box confirming the "*Estimated Value is correct*" was ticked yes, but the narrative then said the estimate she'd given was not supported. She also said the valuer had ignored the property improvements they'd made. Because the property was undervalued, she and Mr S had to make a lump sum payment to the mortgage, to reduce the loan to value and access a better rate.

Our investigator repeated that NatWest didn't have to challenge the valuation here. She said that NatWest had explained the "*Estimated Value is correct*" box was just to check that NatWest had correctly recorded what Miss S thought the property was worth. That's why that was ticked yes, and this wasn't evidence of an error by the valuer.

Our investigator asked what level of compensation Miss S was seeking, and Miss S said £1,500. But our investigator said that this didn't fit with our service's overall approach to compensation, which is published on our website. She felt the payment NatWest had already made did fit with our service's approach.

Because no agreement was reached, this case then came to me for a final decision.

What I've decided – and why

I've considered all the available evidence and arguments to decide what's fair and reasonable in the circumstances of this complaint.

I've reached the same overall conclusion on this complaint as our investigator.

Miss S is unhappy with the figure that a valuer arrived at, for her property, which she felt was much too low. But our service doesn't have jurisdiction over valuers or surveyors, and I cannot directly challenge the valuer's view. I can only look at what NatWest did here.

NatWest has stressed that it doesn't have its own professional expertise on property values, so it instructs someone from outside the bank. I can see that NatWest did instruct a valuer who was a member of an appropriate professional body. So the starting point here is that NatWest is entitled to rely on the professional opinion it seeks.

I should also note that when NatWest asked for a professional opinion on the value of Mr S and Miss S's property, it wasn't asking what they might achieve, if they marketed the property for sale themselves. It was asking about how much it could safely lend on this property. And in doing that, NatWest has to take into account that if the very worst happens, there are unexpected difficulties paying this mortgage and the property has to be sold, it would need to achieve a sale quickly. That's because, in this worst-case scenario, any debt that Mr S and Miss S had would continue to increase until the property was sold.

So it's not unusual for the valuation offered for mortgage purposes to be less than that offered by estate agents considering a sale. The two things aren't the same. And I don't think that, just because the valuation Miss S received here was lower than she was expecting, that means NatWest shouldn't rely on it.

I can see the challenges Miss S raised to the valuation were passed on to the valuer by NatWest, and each time a response was received, explaining briefly that the evidence hadn't changed the valuer's professional opinion. I don't think NatWest ought to have concluded that the valuer had failed to consider Miss S's challenges, or that the valuation previously received had been undermined.

Overall, I don't think NatWest failed to support Miss S, in dealing with her concerns about the valuation figure. But I can see that NatWest made some mistakes. It shouldn't have referred Miss S to the valuer's professional body, or at least not without explaining the limitations on what that body might do, when the client wasn't Miss S but NatWest itself. And it should have properly actioned her complaint when it first received that. So I agree with Miss S's complaint on these points.

But, like our investigator, I do think that a payment of £100 which NatWest has made fits with the overall approach taken by our service to compensation. And that means this complaint won't be upheld. That's not because NatWest didn't do anything wrong at all. It did provide some poor service. However, I think that what NatWest has already offered for that, does provide a fair and reasonable outcome to these parts of Miss S's complaint.

My final decision

I don't uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr S and Miss S to accept or reject my decision before 22 December 2025.

Esther Absalom-Gough
Ombudsman